

**CAPITOL/DOWNTOWN
CENTRAL CORRIDOR TASK FORCE
FEBRUARY 27, 2007**

MEETING NOTES

Task Force

Members Present: Kristina Smitten, Paul Mohrbacher, Deborah Rathman, Ta-coumba Aiken, Larry Englund, Jerry Hersman, Steve Schmidt, Pat Lamb

Task Force

Members Absent: Rhys Ledger, Phil Mason, Jose Gonzalez, Michael Noble, Diane Thormodsgard, Craig Lien, Mike Burns, Kim Hyers, John Bennett

Guests Present: Kathy Fischer, Art Coulson, Karen Lyons, Tim Griffin, Mark Voerding, Sandra Harrigan

Staff Present: Jess Rosenfeld, Lucy Thompson, Allen Lovejoy, Paul Mandell, Larry Soderholm, John Maczko

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Kristina Smitten welcomed task force members, who introduced themselves. Guests were also introduced.

Review of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

Review of Meeting Notes from February 6, 2007

The notes were approved as written.

Discussion of Results from Bennett Loop Analysis

Kathy Fischer, Ramsey County staff, addressed the task force, noting that Commissioner Bennett's primary intent with the Loop is to capture more riders at key destinations. Regardless of what happens to the Loop proposal, she encouraged the task force to keep two things in mind as it completes its work on the Central Corridor Development Strategy:

- How do we provide transit service to currently underserved riders at key destinations?
- What is the appropriate way to connect LRT to the other transit modes at Union Depot (at 4th Street or at the concourse level)?

Kathy praised the task force for its work.

Allen Lovejoy, PED staff, responded to both of the questions Kathy posed. He encouraged the task force to think about how we can more effectively use existing bus service to serve the downtown entertainment district (and other underserved destinations, such as Metro State University). In terms of a "seamless connection" between modes at Union Depot, Allen relayed an idea that had been posted on one of the presentation boards at the Open House: a vertical connection right at 4th Street, which takes LRT riders from street-level down to the concourse level. He noted that he

believes a majority of the people coming to Union Depot are destined for Lowertown, not to make an intermodal connection. Preliminary engineering is the appropriate place to explore this issue in more detail.

Noting that one of the other motivations behind the Bennett Loop proposal is the anticipated impact of the Cedar/4th alignment on District Energy facilities, Allen noted that it appears that a 16' travel lane on both Cedar and 4th will allow for maneuvering around trucks and stopped buses, as well as provide right-of-way within which District Energy facilities can be relocated if necessary.

Paul Mohrbacher suggested that bus service through downtown will need to be "scrambled" if LRT runs on Cedar and 4th streets, both to eliminate redundancy in service and to serve destinations on the edge of downtown not immediately adjacent to the planned LRT route. Lovejoy agreed that bus service into and through downtown should be re-evaluated as part of Preliminary Engineering.

In response to how LRT will be accessible to those with limited physical mobility, Lovejoy reminded the task force that LRT is simply one mode in a larger transit *system*, and that bus routes can be studied to better integrate with LRT service. Tim Griffin encouraged exploring an enhanced pedestrian realm as part of the transit network.

The task force agreed that connecting LRT riders to the entertainment district and other key underserved destinations in downtown is critical, and that the specifics of how this is done should be left to staff, experts and the Metropolitan Council as part of Preliminary Engineering.

Discussion of Any "Big Ideas" Missing from the Draft Development Strategy

Overall, the task force feels that the Capitol/Downtown segment of the Central Corridor Development Strategy is complete, with the following additions and changes. (Note: these are broad summaries of the comments.)

- Recommendations to replace public parking with green space and development adjacent to the Capitol should be tempered, since the surface parking lots are necessary to serve Capital Area visitors.
- The scale of development indicated for the Sears block would require variances or a rezoning from the CAAPB.
- Wayfinding from the LRT route to downtown destinations and the river – via both sidewalk and skyway - needs to be beefed up.
- The base map on p. 59 should be used for all maps for this segment of the line.
- The positive community-building and economic development impact of 5000-7000 new housing units downtown needs to be beefed up. This amount of additional housing units could provide the "critical mass" needed to finally bring neighborhood retail, services and amenities (such as a grocery store and movie theater) to downtown.
- The Transit Opportunity Zone overlay may not be an appropriate fit for downtown.

In addition, written comments were received from Paul Mohrbacher and Paul Mandell.

Discussion of Priority Actions for Capitol/Downtown Segment

Due to time constraints, the task force decided to save this agenda item for the March 13 meeting. Given the volume of recommended action steps in the document, staff encouraged task force members to start with Initiatives #57-90 (p. 23-25). The 19 Community-Building Strategies (p. 89-92) should also be reviewed.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m. The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 13, 2007, 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the 13th Floor Conference Room of City Hall Annex. Agenda items will be: 1) review final draft of comments to send to Urban Strategies; 2) prioritize action steps; and 3) discuss what happens next in the process.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucy Thompson
Senior Planner
March 7, 2007